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Qualifications Required for Australian Special Education Roles

If anyone had any doubt about the decline in availability of specialist instructional support in our schools, one only has to check the qualifications needed to take up a role related to disability and learning and behavioural difficulties in departments of education across Australia. This applies not just to the special education roles in specialist and mainstream schools but also to senior roles in departmental offices. The following examples of advertised essential/desirable qualifications for those working in special education support roles has been taken from state departments of education websites.

New South Wales Department of Education: Four types of teachers are listed on the NSW Department of Education website. These include 1. Early childhood teachers 2. Primary teachers 3. Secondary teachers and 4. Specialist teachers. The specialist teachers listed include teachers with “expertise in a particular field, such as career advising, teacher librarianship and teaching English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D). Qualifications are listed for: career advisors “Careers advisors are secondary trained teachers who have undertaken an approved course of study in career education”; teacher librarians “Teacher librarians) are trained teachers who have also undertaken an approved course of study in teacher librarianship”; and EAL/D teachers “EAL/D teachers are qualified primary or secondary teachers who have completed approved TESOL ... studies”). **No specific qualifications could be found for special/inclusive education teachers.** <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teach-nsw/explore-teaching/types-of-teachers/specialist-teachers>

Advertisements for Special Education Roles in NSW State Schools

It seems that the requirements to work in special education roles in state education are even lower in 2024 than they were when Stephenson and Carter (2014) investigated advertisements for special education roles a decade ago. The following advertisements were copied from the NSW DoE website. Not one of the advertisements for any special education role, including senior roles, listed a qualification in special education as either essential or even desirable. All advertisements include the criterion that applicants need “approval to teach special education and/or experience...” The criteria for gaining approval are not clearly stated on the departmental website.

Teacher Special Education at Schools for Specific Purposes

Chalmers Road School - Provides educational programs for students K-12 with high and moderate support needs, including intellectual and physical disabilities, autism, and complex health needs
Advertisement Number A900134184; 01-May-2024, 4:00:00 PM

Specific Selection Criteria

- Approval to teach special education and/or experience teaching students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, autism and behavioural needs
- Highly developed communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to work collaboratively, proactively and professionally with colleagues, students and parents/carers
- Demonstrated experience and skills in using a wide range of current technology to support a diverse range of learners
- Demonstrated capacity to differentiate personalised teaching and learning programs to engage for students with disabilities, focusing on improvement in literacy, numeracy

Lomandra School - A sShool for Specific Purposes, supports students, years 5-12, with severe disruptive behaviours and/or complex mental health conditions
Advertisement Number A900130053; 24-Apr-2024, 4:00:00 PM

Specific Selection Criteria

- Approval to teach special education and/or experience teaching students with emotional disturbance, behavioural difficulties, autism and complex mental health (primary and/or secondary)
- Demonstrated ability to plan, deliver and differentiate highly effective teaching and learning programs and quality assessments which drive improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes, engage and inspire students while meeting their diverse learning needs
- Evidence of strong organisational, communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to work as part of a collaborative team and build positive relationships with all students, staff, parents, external agencies, and members of the wider community
- Demonstrated ability to use planned, strategic and effective classroom management practices to build high expectations, relationships and create a positive learning culture that supports the needs of a diverse range of students
- Demonstrated skills and strategies for positively influencing student wellbeing that includes an awareness of Aboriginal Cultural Education and the ability to engage Aboriginal students to ensure educational outcomes designed for closing the gap

The Hills School - caters for the education needs of 116 students from K -12 years with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, Autism and complex needs including physical disability, sensory impairment and complex health care needs.
Advertisement Number A900134310; 01-May-2024, 4:00:00 PM

Specific Selection Criteria

- Approval to teach special education and/or experience in working with students with moderate/severe intellectual disabilities, Autism, sensory and physical disabilities, challenging behaviours and complex healthcare needs, K-12
- Ability to differentiate the curriculum and assess, design, implement and evaluate personalised learning plans that are based on identified needs to engage students and improve learning outcomes
- Demonstrated capacity to implement effective student wellbeing strategies which promote engagement and contribute to positive, productive and safe learning environments
- Highly developed organisational, communication and interpersonal skills that support positive and productive relationships with students, staff, families and other key stakeholders

Teacher Special Education - Minerva School (2 positions) providing a specialised education for students with an intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, autism and associated mental health support needs
Advertisement Number A900133188; 24-Apr-2024, 4:00:00 PM

Specific Selection Criteria

- Approval to teach Special Education and/or experience teaching students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities with accompanying complex emotional, behavioural and other disabilities including autism to provide inclusive educational opportunities
- Highly developed interpersonal and communication skills with the ability to work in a collaborative team and establish relationships with students, community, colleagues and support agencies
- Demonstrated capacity to plan, deliver and evaluate differentiated personalised learning programs which reflect a knowledge of the new curriculum (K-6 as well as Life Skills), assessment and student welfare

Special Class in Mainstream School

Berala Public School - supporting the learning of approximately 710 students including 21 students in a newly established Inclusive Education Unit (Autism). Over 97% of students have a language background other than English

Advertisement Number A900133998; 24-Apr-2024, 4:00:00 PM

Specific Selection Criteria

- Approval to teach special education and/or experience teaching students with Autism, intellectual disability and behaviour difficulties
- Demonstrated ability to design highly differentiated educational programs and Personalised Learning Support Plans for students with diverse learning needs, facilitating a culture of high expectations for all students
- Evidence of exemplary quality teaching to integrate a high-quality differentiated curriculum in literacy and numeracy into effective and successful classroom practice for all students, including high potential, gifted education students, students with learning difficulties and/or EAL/D students
- Outstanding communication, organisation and interpersonal skills and the ability to engage proactively and professionally with students and parents, from a diverse range of backgrounds, staff, support agencies and the wider community, as part of a collaborative team
- Demonstrated outstanding classroom management skills and proven capacity to implement positive behaviour strategies to enhance student engagement and participation through whole school wellbeing programs.

Executive Positions in Special Education

Head Teacher Special Education - Prairiewood High School

Includes four Support Unit (Autism, IO and Autism/IO) classes across Years 7 to 12. Currently there are two junior and two senior classes in our support unit. 85% of students have a Language Background Other Than English and students represent 30 countries of origin.

Advertisement Number A900133742; 24-Apr-2024, 4:00:00 PM

Specific Selection Criteria

Applicants must satisfy the teacher training and academic qualification requirements for this position. In addition to the general selection criteria,

- Approval to teach Special Education and/or demonstrated experience and expertise in leading a faculty that effectively meets student needs including autism, intellectual disabilities and complex communication and behavioural needs
- Demonstrated capacity to lead and develop a positive and vibrant faculty culture, including the ability to enhance collaboration with a range of stakeholders to achieve the best possible outcomes for students
- Demonstrated ability to build teacher and SLSO capacity within the design and implementation of new curriculum reform that effectively meets the learning needs of Autism, IO and Autism/IO students that come from diverse language backgrounds
- Demonstrated capacity to be a dynamic member of the school executive team, supporting the implementation of a range of whole school and departmental priorities

General Selection Criteria

- Successful teaching experience with capacity to initiate improvement in teaching, learning and classroom practice
- Knowledge of curriculum, assessment and student welfare with the ability to lead and design quality, inclusive teaching and learning programs
- Educational leadership skills to build the capacity and manage the performance of individuals and teams
- Well developed communication and interpersonal skills with the capacity to build relationships and engage students, staff and parents

- Ability to plan and manage resources effectively and equitably to support teaching and learning
- Knowledge of and commitment to the Department's Aboriginal education policy

Assistant Principal Special Education - General - Briar Road Public School The school has The school has 305 students enrolled and 3 support unit classes

Advertisement Number A900134187; 01-May-2024, 4:00:00 PM

Specific Selection Criteria

- In addition to the general selection criteria, approval to teach special education and/or experience, as well as demonstrated ability to implement and lead whole school evidence-based learning programs
- Proven ability to develop and implement effective student engagement and wellbeing programs and practices that support diverse and complex needs, including behaviour, social and academic needs
- Excellent interpersonal skills and demonstrated capacity to work as an effective member of collaborative school teams, building and maintaining culturally safe, trusting relationships with students, staff, external agencies and the wider community
- Demonstrated ability to lead a support unit, effectively managing the dual role of an Assistant Principal and exemplary classroom teacher, with the ability to build and strengthen collaborative practice and staff capabilities

General Selection Criteria

- Successful teaching experience with capacity to initiate improvement in teaching, learning and classroom practice
- Knowledge of curriculum, assessment and student welfare with the ability to lead and design quality, inclusive teaching and learning programs
- Educational leadership skills to build the capacity and manage the performance of individuals and teams
- Well developed communication and interpersonal skills with the capacity to build relationships and engage students, staff and parents
- Ability to plan and manage resources effectively and equitably to support teaching and learning
- Knowledge of and commitment to the Department's Aboriginal education policy

Reference

Stephenson, J., & Carter, M. (2014). What do employers ask for in advertisements for special education positions? *Australasian Journal of Special Education*, 38, 51-62. doi: 10.1017/jse.2014.3